

COMMERCIAL AVIATION (CONTINUED) : WORLD NEWS

British Airways' Fourteens

LAST Sunday two of the four Lockheed 14s which have been ordered by British Airways arrived at Southampton. They will be assembled at the airport there, and then be flown to the company's operational headquarters at Heston. Survey flights to Lisbon will be started as soon as the second two Fourteens have been delivered this month.

Rome-Baghdad

ALA LITTORIA, the Italian operating company, will shortly start a regular service between Rome and Baghdad, via Brindisi, Rhodes and Haifa.

On Thursday of last week a Savoia-Marchetti left Littorio airport, Rome, at 5 a.m. on the first experimental flight over this route. The flight was made in two stages in the outward direction, but the homeward run was to be made in one day. No passengers were carried.

And Now K.L.M.

SINCE the Portuguese Government has granted permission for K.L.M. to land at Lisbon and the Cape Verde Islands, it is to be supposed that the preparations for the suggested service between Amsterdam and the Netherlands West Indies will go ahead fairly rapidly. In all probability this South Atlantic service will be surveyed in sections, and it does not seem likely that it will be regularly operated until next year.

At present K.L.M. operate quite a number of important services in the West Indies, using Lockheed 14s as well as the Fokkers which have been out there for some considerable time. In due course these coastal services, which now connect La Guaira, Curaçao, Aruba, Maracaibo and Barranquilla, will be extended to Cucuta (Colombia), and to Port of Spain, Barbados and Paramaribo.

High-altitude Transport

LARGELY for eventual use on such services as that from Amsterdam to Rome, on which considerable operating heights are normally attained, K.L.M. have now taken delivery of the first consignment of Wright Cyclone G.105 engines. These are fitted with two-speed superchargers, and when the company's D.C.3s are fitted with them the machines will be the first transports in Europe to be equipped for serious operation at widely different altitudes. G.105 engines are at present used by Pan-American Grace Airways on their trans-Andean services.

In last week's issue we mentioned that Chandler Groves carburettors were being fitted to all the engines of K.L.M.'s D.C.3s, and examples of these accessories are already being installed. Certain machines will also be equipped very shortly with Hamilton hydromatic full-feathering airscrews, and unless British Airways' Lockheed 14s go into service before long, these will be the first of the type to be used in Europe.

Atlantic Postponement

WHILST being put through its overload take-off tests last Saturday evening, the second Atlantic Albatross broke its back. Two perfectly normal take-offs and landings had been made in the hands of the De Havilland Aircraft Company's chief test pilot, Mr. Geoffrey De Havilland, and it was not until the machine had completed its third landing run and was almost at a standstill that the fuselage structure collapsed immediately aft of the long-range tanks and across the point where the door is arranged.

In appearance there was nothing very unusual or disturbing about either the take-offs or the landings, though, with its 3,000-lb. overload, there was, perhaps, rather more noticeable flexing in the fuselage than is normally to be expected. Each landing with such a heavy load had been made quite deliberately on the wheels, and during deceleration there was a normal amount of fore and aft pitching, while it seemed that the main undercarriage legs as well as the tail wheel leg were bottoming under the heavy load. This last fact may possibly have had some bearing on the eventual failure.

After the third touch-down, which was certainly the smoothest of the three, the rear door suddenly opened—obviously, and with later knowledge, presaging disaster. While the Albatross was still travelling at, perhaps, 20 m.p.h. there were three or four loud reports, and the final collapse occurred a few seconds later after the machine had swung gently to the right. In their statement the De Havilland Aircraft Company say that the failure is understood and is of a relatively simple character. The weakness is being remedied in production machines.

Seriously Arctic?

COL. LINDBERGH'S visit to the Soviet Union seems to be more than an ordinary holiday trip. According to Finnish newspaper accounts, he is travelling on a special mission on behalf of a big American airline group which is interested in the possibilities of an intercontinental airline between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Col. Lindbergh is having daily conferences with Professor Otto Schmidt and a number of leading aviation men, among whom is M. Gromof. It is reported that serious negotiations are on foot for the opening of a regular air service from Moscow, via Bear Islands and the North Pole, to Alaska and New York.

Col. Lindbergh has made several test flights with new machines which the Soviet industry has designed and produced for Arctic flying, and a correspondent of the Finnish newspaper, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, has gathered from a telephone interview with Col. Lindbergh that he and Gromof are preparing a non-stop flight to New York in April or May next. Immediately following this initial flight, it is further reported, a regular service will be opened next summer.

The China National Affair

STRONG feelings were aroused last week by the attack which was reported to have been made on a China National Aviation Douglas which was flying on its normal service between Hongkong and Hankow. The incident has been made more serious by the fact that China National is partly American owned and the pilot was in any case of American nationality.

According to the original statement the machine was attacked by Japanese fighters both in the air and after a forced landing in a creek. The most recent reports say that twelve of the seventeen occupants were either killed or drowned. The Japanese Foreign Office, however, say that the machine was not fired on, but was chased after "suspicious behaviour" and was forced to put down near an island in West River. Although the Japanese Government explained that constant care is exercised to prevent such possibilities, they could not accept responsibility for civil machines flying in the war zone. The affair occurred on Wednesday of last week.

The "Cygnus" Accident

THE Italian authorities have duly investigated the accident to *Cygnus*, one of the Imperial Airways fleet of Short Empire boats, which occurred in Brindisi Harbour on December 5 last year. In this accident the steward and one passenger were killed, while the radio operator and five other passengers were injured.

Assuming that there were no defects in the material, the authorities have concluded that the causes might be looked for in one or more of four possibilities. These four were: Overloading; the existence of a swell which caused the machine to leave the water too soon; the presumed action of the pilot in forcing the machine off either by incorrect use of the flaps or otherwise; and the presumed staving-in of the lower part of the nose after the second impact.

From consideration of the evidence, the chief inspector of accidents at the Air Ministry is satisfied that there was no defect in the control system or in the structure, and that the machine was carrying less than the maximum load—which was, in any case, correctly distributed.

The already known conclusion has been reached that the captain of *Cygnus* attempted to take off with the flaps in the full down position, and that this maladjustment was due to the fact that the routine take-off instructions between the captain and the supernumerary captain were not carried out and checked. As a result of trials it has been found that the machine will porpoise with the flaps in this position, and if the porpoising is not immediately checked the boat will quickly go out of control.

The incorrect setting of the flaps, therefore, was the cause of the accident, and the chief inspector goes on to explain that rescue and salvage operations were promptly and successfully carried out by the Brindisi authorities, and that the first officer showed great courage in making his way into the rear cabin to save three passengers who were unable to help themselves.

Since the accident Imperial Airways have reviewed the routine instructions in connection with the take-off and are satisfied that these are adequate. A reminder has, however, been sent to all concerned. The second pilot in this case, on being given the word "flaps," adjusted them into the fully down instead of the take-off position.